

THIS WEEK MAGAZINE

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THE RIGHT GENERAL

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Men like Eisenhower, Marshall, Bradley and Ridgway have been Army Chiefs of Staff. On Thursday, they gain a worthy successor — scholarly Maxwell D. Taylor

by Dorothy Brandon



ON THURSDAY, General Matthew B. Ridgway will step down as Army Chief of Staff. Into the position — the top job in the Army and one of the four chief military posts of the nation — will come 53-year-old, multilingual General Maxwell D. Taylor.

General Taylor, who will be taking over for two years a title that has been held by such illustrious names as Marshall, Eisenhower and Bradley, is one of the generation of military men who have risen to the highest echelons in the decade since World War II. In that conflict, he became a major general and commander of an airborne division in Western Europe. In 1945, he returned to the United States to be superintendent at West Point. Back in Europe,

he was chief of staff of American forces and later American commander in Berlin. In the closing days of the Korean war, he took over command of the 8th Army and became, in the nervous months of the Formosa crisis, commander-in-chief of the United Nations and United States Far East Command.

He Ran Risks

This steadily rising career can be partially attributed, of course, to the fact that never before in a "peacetime" decade has the Army required so many top-ranking commanders. On the other hand, there are good reasons why General Taylor was selected for his posts.

Through talent, training and experience,

he has developed into a shrewd, resolute leader who never relaxes his steel-trap mind. He is a fireball of physical energy. Soft-spoken, sometimes humorous, the general balances off his drive with careful graciousness. Even when angry — and it is said that a man on the receiving end of a Taylor reprimand never forgets the experience — the general keeps his voice down.

General Taylor has displayed personal courage and daring in many critical situations. Commanding the 101st Airborne Division during World War II, he jumped twice in combat with his men. His sorties through enemy lines were "impossible" deeds. For the cloak-and-dagger risks he ran on a wartime mission to Rome ahead of the invasion of Italy, General Taylor

was declared by President Eisenhower, then his commander, to have run risks "greater than I asked any other agent or emissary to undertake during the war."

In Korea, General Taylor frequently flew over the front lines in a helicopter, exposed to enemy fire, and put down at forward command posts for on-the-spot consultations. Asked why, the general replied, "To make command decisions, I had to get up high to see what was going on."

Tall, slim, graying, General Taylor "fights weight, like most middle-aged people," according to his youthful-looking wife.

Maxwell and Lydia Taylor, now leaving Tokyo, are old "Japan hands." They arrived first in Tokyo in 1935, with their two small sons: John Maxwell, now working for the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington, and Thomas Happer, now a West Point plebe. The army had ordered young Captain Taylor to Nippon for a four-year tour of duty as a Japanese language student at the Embassy.

Streetcar Study

THE Taylors moved into a good low-rental neighborhood and at once began enjoying their new life. Captain Taylor, not content with eight hours daily language study, rode back and forth by streetcar to his classes, eyes always riveted on his language cards.

"It's a wonder Max wasn't arrested," declared Mrs. Taylor. "In those days anti-American feeling was running high and seeing him in a public conveyance avoided by most foreigners was in itself enough to arouse suspicion — but when he began poring over *kanji* — Japanese calligraphy — on little cards, it's a miracle that he

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SOLDIER — DIPLOMAT: Left, Taylor as airborne leader. Right, as U.S. Berlin commander, he talks with Russians

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wasn't grabbed for questioning."

By the time he returned to the Army War College in Washington in 1939, Captain Taylor was able to converse easily in Japanese, as well as read and write the language. This would be a remarkable accomplishment in almost any man except Maxwell Taylor, who also speaks fluent Spanish, French, German, Italian and Korean. Mrs. Taylor readily explains this talent.

"Max has made a hobby of languages the way some men take up golf and bridge," she said. "Study relaxes him and takes his mind off his problems; that's why he never fails to concentrate at least an hour a day on language review."

During their 30 years of marriage, she has never known her husband to be without a packet of language cards in his pocket. Mrs. Taylor recalls that the general told her he had his Japanese cards in his pocket when he jumped in combat in France.

Mental Index

MEN serving under General Taylor vow their leader's hearing is so acute that to him, "falling dust sounds like a hailstorm." It is claimed that he frequently quotes wartime briefings word for word.

"The general keeps everything he hears mentally indexed -- and he hears everything that's said," asserted a staff colonel.

When General Taylor arrived in Seoul to take command of the 8th Army he baffled his staff by speaking more basic Korean than most military men acquired during a year of duty. Word got

around that he had "picked up" the words and phrases studying a conversational manual while in flight from Washington.

When the truce talks finally ended in an armistice, General Taylor began studying Korean in earnest. He soon surprised President Syngman Rhee and other Korean speech-makers at a dedication ceremony by stepping forward and addressing the large audience in letter-perfect Korean.

Talk in Tokyo

GENERAL TAYLOR denied that it was a linguistic feat: "Put it down as memorized oratory."

The general and his wife are fundamentally shy, sensitive people. He is an introverted extrovert, a scholar, soldier and diplomat; free from pose and without trace of mental snobbery. If he had not chosen an Army career, Maxwell Taylor would most probably have become a teacher of either mathematics or languages. He would have been well adapted to the serenity of campus life.

The general is a non-smoker and strictly a one (well-watered) drink man. He likes jokes -- and tells them, even on himself.

He is also conscious of the fun around him: such as the possessive behavior of Mr. Po, his black cocker spaniel; the shape of his wife's newest hat.

As commander-in-chief of FEC, General Taylor had plenty of opportunity to speak Japanese, both on the job and socially. Officials of the Japanese government and top-ranking officers of the Japanese Self

Defense Force were often at FEC headquarters for conference discussions. Japanese dignitaries and their wives were invited to many functions at the big Tudor-style mansion occupied by General and Mrs. Taylor.

"Even we Japanese who speak English felt freer talking to General Taylor," asserted a Japanese foreign service officer. "Because of his knowledge of our language, we know he has insight into our culture and thinking."

General Taylor became a skillful statesman-general in Korea. There he dealt regularly with the iron-willed edicts of President Rhee and was able to keep intact American military policy. Patient -- to a point -- always tactful, the general kept the upper hand and the friendship of Rhee.

"Velvet-Gloved"

A MEMBER of General Taylor's staff who sat in on many of the arguments over the training and deployment of the 20-division Republic of Korea Army, that the United States insisted should not be separated from the command of the 8th Army, described the conference manner of his boss as "smooth, just like a piece of granite."

"The general is a velvet-gloved driver; he always gets where he intends to go, without grinding the gears," the staff officer said.

When official announcement of his appointment as commander-in-chief of FEC was released, a member of FEC made a comment that applies just as well to Taylor's new post: "I'd say he's the right general, in the right place, at the right time." *The End*

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HIGH-LEVEL TALK: Ex-Chief of Staff Eisenhower advises new one, Taylor

WIDE WORLD

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